

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 5 ATHENS 4072

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR, ET

SUBJECT: CLOSOUT OF USG FACILITIES IN ASMARA; FINAL REPORT

FROM WAUCHOPE FOR DEPARTMENT

REF: ATHENS 3977 (DTG 291657Z APR 77)

1. SUMMARY: BETWEEN APRIL 23 AND 29, THE CLOSEOUT OF KAGNEW COMMUNICATION FACILITY AND THE CONGEN WAS SUCCESSFULLY ACCOMPLISHED IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FITFUL COOPERATION AND LATENT HOSTILITY. BY A COMBINATION OF TWO MAC C-141 FLIGHTS APRIL 27 AND ONE FLIGHT APRIL 29, 44 USG PERSONNEL, 5 NON-AMERICAN DEPENDENTS AND TWO DOGS WERE WITHDRAWN FROM ASMARA. IN ADDITION, SEVERAL MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF SENSITIVE, VALUABLE
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AND/OR UNIQUE COMMUNICATIONS EQUIPMENT WAS REMOVED FROM KAGNEW, AN ESTIMATED \$150,000 OF USG PROPERTY WAS SHIPPED FROM THE CONGEN, AND VIRTUALLY ALL PERSONAL EFFECTS WERE AIRLIFTED TO ATHENS. A CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF EVENTS FOLLOWS. RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE A COMPREHENSIVE DEBRIEF BE CONDUCTED OF ALL THE PRINCIPALS PRIOR TO THEIR DISPERSING TO ONWARD ASSIGNMENTS; REVIEW

OF DESTRUCTION PROCEDURE; COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS; COORDINATION AND CONTROL: CONSULAR MATTERS; ADMIN PROBLEMS; AND DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION. END SUMMARY.

2. SHORTLY AFTER 1900 LOCAL SATURDAY, APRIL 23, I RECEIVED A CALL FROM THE CHARGE ALERTING US OF AN IMMEDIATE NIAC MESSAGE OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE WHICH WAS TO ARRIVE MOMENTARILY. THIRTY MINUTES LATER WE RECEIVED WORD OF THE EPMG ORDER TO CLOSE KAGNEW AND THE CONGEN IN FOUR DAYS. I INFORMED OIC NAVCOMUNIT (NCU) IMMEDIATELY AND CALLED A MEETING OF KAGNEW PRINCIPALS AND CONGEN STAFF FOR 0700 SUNDAY. OIC ORDERED DESTRUCTION OF CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY. THE REMAINDER OF THE EVENING THE ADMIN OFFICER AND I DISCUSSED PRIORITIES FOR THE CLOSEOUT.

3. THE 0700 MEETING APRIL 24 INCLUDED THE OIC, CPO OFNCU, CISCO PROJECT MANAGER, PA&E PROJECT MANAGER, PAGE PERSONNEL MANAGER, KAGNEW SECURITY OFFICER, CONGEN ADMIN OFFICER, CRO AND NCOIC OF MSG DETACHMENT. FOLLOWING PRIORITIES WERE ESTABLISHED:

A. SAFEGUARDING, SHIPMENT (IF POSSIBLE) AND/OR DESTRUCTION OF CLASSIFIED EQUIPMENT AND DOCUMENTS.

B. PRETECTION AND EVACUATION OF USG PERSONNEL, MAINTENANCE OF CONTACT WITH PRIVATE AMCITS, AND APPROPRIATE TREATMENT FOR ETHIOPIAN EMPLOYEES,

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C. REMOVAL OF USG PROPERTY, AND

D. REMOVAL OF PERSONAL EFFECTS.

THE MEETING ADJOURNED AND PRINCIPALS INITIATED PRIORITY REQUIREMENTS. DESTRUCTION OF CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS BEGAN AT CONGEN, AND DISASSEMBLY OF EQUIPMENT STARTED AT KAGNEW. AT APPROX 1100 PROBLEMS OF ACCESS TO OPERATIONAL TRACT BRAVO DEVELOPED, AS CO OF EPMG SECURITY FORCE BLOCKED FIRST ENTRY, LATER DEPARTURE, FROM SITE. DURING THIS PERIOD, I ATTEMPTED TO CONTACT RESPONSIBLE EPMG OFFICIALS TO DETERMINE THEIR INSTRUCTIONS ON CLOSURE. I EVENTUALLY LOCATED THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE LOCAL MOFA, WHO HAD NO INSTRUCTIONS, BUT PROMISED TO GET BACK TO US. HE PROMPTLY MADE HIMSELF UNAVAILABLE FOR THE REMINDER OF THE DAY. EFFORTS WERE THEN MADE THROUGH THE CHIEF OF SAFF OF SECOND DIVISION TO RESOLVE THE ACCESS PROBLEM TO BRAVO. THIS WAS TEMPORARILY RESOLVED AND THEN RESTRICTIONS WERE RE-IMPOSED. AS THIS PROBLEM

WAS WAXING AND WANING, ABRAHAM MEBRATHU, DIRECTOR OF LOCAL MOFA, VISITED THE CONGEN TO ASSURE US IN THE NAME OF THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR WE WOULD ENJOY THE COMPLETE COOPERATION OF THE EPMG. HE FURTHER PROMISED TO EXPEDITE ISSUANCE OF EXIT PERMITS, RENEW TRAVEL DOCUMENTS OF TWO ETHIOPIAN DEPENDENTS, AND TO ARRANGE RETURN TO ASMARE OF TWO CISCO EMPLOYEES ON LEAVE IN MASSAWA.

4. SHORTLY AFTER ABRAHAM'S DEPARTURE, THE SINGLE MOST DRAMATIC INCIDENT BEGAN TO MOVE TO A DECISIVE CONCLUSION. OIC REPORTED THAT ACCESS IN AND OUT OF BRAVO WAS COMPLETELY HALTED, AND HE LATER HEARD FROM BACK CHANNEL EPMG MILITARY CONTACTS THAT A) NO EQUIPMENT WAS TO BE REMOVED FROM BRAVO, B) THE TRACT WOULD BE INSPECTED SOMETIME MONDAY MORNING, AND C) NOTHING WAS TO BE DESTROYED. DESPITE SEVERAL TELEPHONE NUMBERS ABRAHAM LEFT US, I COULD NOT RE-ESTABLISH CONTACT UNTIL

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JUST AFTER 1500. I PROTESTED THE EPMG'S DENIAL OF MOVEMENT AND THE PROPOSED INSPECTION, CONCLUDING THAT IF NOT PERMITTED TO REMOVE CERTAIN "SECURE" EQUIPMENT, WE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RENDER IT INOPERATIVE. HE WAS SYMPATHETIC AND PROMISED TO PURSUE THE MATTER WITH HIGHER AUTHORITY. AT THIS POINT I ALERTED THE OIC

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THAT OUR PROTEST COULD PROVOKE THE EPMG TO MOVE AGAINST BRAVO EVEN SOONER. OIC ACCELERATED THE PACE OF DESTRUCTION AT THIS TIME. ALTHOUGH ABRAHAM CALLED ONCE MORE TO ASSURE THAT THE PROBLEMS AT BRAVO WOULD BE RESOLVED, AT APPROX 1915 WE RECEIVED A RELAYED RADIO MESSAGE FROM BRAVO THAT ALL USG PERSONNEL WERE TO EVACUATE THE TRACT IN TEN MINUTES. ON RECEIPT OF THIS ORDER, OIC STALLED THE EPMG SECURITY TROOPS WHICH WERE TO EXECUTE THIS ORDER FOR ALMOST 30 MINUTES WHILE ALL REMAINING KEYING MATERIAL WAS DESTROYED AND ALL BUT TWO CRYPTO UNITS WERE EFFICIENTLY AND DISCRETELY RENDERED INOPERATIVE (OIC NCU IS PROVIDING MORE DETAILED REPORT OF HIS ACTIONS AT THIS TIME). ALL USG PERSONNEL DEPARTED BRAVO AT APPROX 1945 WITHOUT FURTHER INCIDENT OR CONFRONTATION. ABRAHAM CALLED AGAIN DURING THIS INCIDENT, AND I STRONGLY PROTESTED EPMG ACTIONS AS BEING IN DIRECT CONFLICT WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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EPMG ASSURANCES OF COOPERATION. HE PROFESSED (APPARENTLY GENUINELY) HIS IGNORANCE OF THE INCIDENT AND AGAIN PROMISED RESOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM. THE SEIZURE OF BRAVO UNDER CLEAR THREAT OF FORCE DETERMINED OUR SUBSEQUENT ACTIONS RE CONGEN CRYPTO EQUIPMENT, AND DESTRUCTION OF CRYPTO NOT REQUIRED FOR IMMEDIATE OPERATION WAS BEGUN. THE THREAT WAS OBVIOUS AND THE HOPE OF RESTRAINING THE EPMG APPEARED NIL. AT THIS POINT WE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER THE EPMG OFFICIALS WERE RECEIVING INSTRUCTIONS OR ADVICE FROM FOREIGN (READ SOVIET OR CUBAN) EXPERTS ON WHAT EQUIPMENT TO SEIZE, AS CUBAN ADVISORS WERE RUMORED TO HAVE ARRIVED IN ASMARA APRIL 24. THE ONLY FURTHER CONTACT WITH EPMG OFFICIALS ON SUNDAY WAS NOTIFICATION FROM ABRAHAM TO MEET AT 0830 MONDAY MORNING WITH THE EPMG CLOSEOUT COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE PROCEDURE FOR "TURNOVER" OF KAGNEW. ALL KAGNEW PERSONNEL WERE CONFINED TO TRACT ECHO OR THE BARATTOLO RESIDENCES.

5. THE MEETING MONDAY (APRIL 25) MORNING WAS EXTREMELY FORMAL AND WAS LIMITED TO DISCUSSION OF KAGNEW. THE EPMG COMMITTEE OF NINE, MOSTLY MILITARY OFFICERS, WAS CHAIRED BY MENGESHA GESESSE, POLAD TO THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR AND FREQUENT SPOKESMAN FOR THE DIRG IN ERITREA. MENGESHA IS INTELLIGENT, EFFICIENT, SHREWD AND RUTHLESS.

HIS ENGLISH IS EXCELLENT, AS HE LATER TOLD ME HE HAD STUDIED AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY. I BEGAN THE MEETING BY DETERMINING THE LIMITS OF THE DISCUSSION AND ASSURING MENGESHA OF OUR COOPERATION. I THEN PROTESTED THE SEIZURE OF BRAVO WHICH ELICITED NO INTELLIGIBLE RESPONSE. MENGESHA THEN AGREED TO LIFT RESTRICTIONS ON MOVEMENT OF KAGNEW PERSONNEL, BUT HE REQUIRED THAT A) NO USG PROPERTY BE REMOVED FROM TRACT ECHO OR BARATTOLO; B) ALTHOUGH PERSONAL EFFECTS COULD BE PACKED FOR REMOVAL, EVERYTHING WOULD BE SUBJECT TO CUSTOMS INSPECTION, AND C) CONTROL OF THE POWER AND WATER PLANTS AND SUPERVISION OF ALL KAGNEW'S LOCAL EMPLOYEES WOULD TRANSFER TO THE EPMG

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IMMEDIATELY. WITHOUT ACCESS TO TRACT BRAVO, NO VITAL COMMO EQUIPMENT COULD BE REMOVED, SO FOR THE SAFETY OF USG PERSONNEL THESE CONDITIONS WERE AGREED TO IN PRINCIPLE PENDING CLARIFICATION OF DETAILS. AT THEIR REQUEST, MENGESHA, ABRAHAM AND THE SEVEN OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS WERE GIVEN A CONDUCTED VEHICULAR TOUR OF ECHO. THEY WERE THEN LED TO BRAVO WHERE, AS THE OIC AND I DID NOT WISH THE RISK OF THEIR DISCOVERING THE DESTRUCTION OF CRYPTO EQUIPMENT INSIDE, A PANORAMIC DESCRIPTION OF THE BUILDINGS ON THE TRACT WAS GIVEN. A MEETING ON CLOSEOUT OF THE CONGEN WAS SCHEDULED ONE HOUR LATER.

6. DURING SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND MONDAY MORNING CONTACT WAS MAINTAINED WITH THE 13 PRIVATE AMCITS, INFORMING THE A) THE CONGEN WAS TO CLOSE APRIL 27, AND B) THEY SHOULD SERIOUSLY CONSIDER PLANNING THEIR IMMINENT DEPARTURE FROM ASMARA. ALL 13 HAVE A LONG ACQUAINTANCE WITH ERITREA AND SOME BINDING TIE--FINANCIAL, RELIGIOUS OR EDUCATIONAL. I MADE EVERY EFFORT NOT TO PANIC THEM AS A) THERE WERE NO RESTRICTIONS OR EXPULSIONS OF PRIVATE FOREIGNERS, B) THE EMBASSY CONFIRMED THERE WAS NO EVIDENCE OF A "RED MARCH" DIRECTED AGAINST ERITREA, AND C) THERE WERE NO REPORTS OF IMMINENT INSURGENT ACTIVITY AGAINST ASMARA. THE ALL RESPONDED WITH EQUANIMITY AND MATURITY, AND MAINTAINED CONTACT WITH THE CONGEN AS REQUESTED.

7. AT THE MEETING LATER MONDAY MORNING, MENGESHA INSISTED CONGEN PERSONNEL SUBMIT TO THE SAME CUSTOMS INSPECTION AS KAGNEW, ALTHOUGH HE DID PROMISE TO "FORWARD" MY REQUEST TO REMOVE CERTAIN FILES AND "OFFICE MACHINES". IN RESPONSE TO MY PROTESTS THAT THE CONGEN ENJOYED SEPARATE AND DISTINCT IMMUNITIES, HE SAID SUCH INSPECTION WAS A "REQUIRED FORMALITY". HE THEN REQUESTED A BRIEF TOUR OF THE CONGEN COMPOUND, PRIOR TO WHICH THE CRO WAS ALERTED TO LOCK HIMSELF IN THE VAULT AND TO ANTICIPATE IMMEDIATE DESTRUCTION OF ALL CRYPTO AND CLASSIFIED

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EQUIPMENT AND DOCUMENTS. THE TOUR OF THE COMPOUND WAS CURSORY, WITH A BRIEF WALK-THROUGH OF THE CONGEN OFFICES. NO NOTE WAS TAKEN OF THE VAULT. BEFORE DEPARTING, MENGESHA WARNED THAT NO USG PROPERTY WAS TO BE REMOVED FROM THE COMPOUND UNTIL CUSTOMS INSPECTION WAS COMPLETED, AND THAT OUR EPMG SECURITY GUARDS WOULD ENFORCE THIS ORDER. THE REMAINDER OF THE DAY WAS DEVOTED TO PACKING PERSONAL EFFECTS AND SELECTING USG PROPERTY FOR SHIPMENT IF PERMISSION WAS GRANTED. PERMISSION TO SHIP CONSULAR, PERSONNEL, B&F AND CLAIMS FILES AND CERTAIN "BUSINESS MACHINES" WAS GRANTED IN THE LATE AFTERNOON. BY LATE THAT EVENING, ALL CONGEN CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS WERE DESTROYED.

8. TUESDAY (APRIL 26) WITNESSED FIRST THE APEX OF OUR FRUSTRATION WITH THE PMG AND THEN A COMPLETE 180-DEGREE

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REVERSAL IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD US. CUSTOMS INSPECTION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS BEGAN AT KAGNEW AS SCHEDULED AT 0800 AND SOON TURNED INTO AN EXERCISE OF OFFICIAL LOOTING. THE ONLY EPMG OFFICIAL AVAILABLE WAS ASSAF AW, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF LOCAL MOFA, AND I FULMINATED AT HIM AT THE "BARBARIC" ACTIONS OF THE CUSTOMS INSPECTORS, DEMANDING HE BRING THE MATTER TO THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR'S ATTENTION IMMEDIATELY. OIC ANDI THEN AGREED TO SUSPEND INSPECTION AT 0915. AT 1030 WE CORNERED MENGESHA AND HIS COLLEAGUES AT ECHO AND REQUESTED AN IMMEDIATE MEETING. MENGESHA HAD ALREADY INSTRUCTED THE CUSTOMS INSPECTORS TO STOP LOOTING, RETURN ALL PROPERTY AND MAKE CURSORY CHECKS ONLY. AT THIS MEETING I PRESENTED MENGESHA WITH ANNOTATED COPIES OF THE VIENNA CONVENTION AND THE 1953 AGREEMENT ON KAGNEW IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTION. ALTHOUGH HE IGNORED THEM, HE CONCEDED
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THAT CONGEN PERSONNEL HOLDING DIPLOMATIC PASSPORTS AND ALL USG PROPERTY WOULD BE EXEMPT FROM INSPECTION. FURTHER, THE CONGEN WOULD BE PERMITTED TO REMOVE WHATEVER USG PROPERTY IT WISHED. WHILE THIS REVERSAL OF APPROACH WAS STARTLING ENOUGH, THE REAL SHOCK WAS HIS ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE OIC COULD RETURN TO BRAVO AND REMOVE ANY EQUIPMENT HE WISHED BUT THAT THERE WAS TO BE NO DESTRUCTION TO THE FACILITY. THE OIC LEFT THE MEETING, FORMED A DETAIL AND PROCEEDED TO BRAVO. HE WAS ABLE TO REMOVE THAT AFTERNOON CERTAIN READILY ACCESSIBLE PRIORITY EQUIPMENT. WE NEVER HAD ANY INDICATION WHY THE RADICAL SHIFT IN EPMG POLICY AT THIS TIME. THAT AFTERNOON WAS SPENT COMPLETING PACKING OF USG PROPERTY AND PERSONAL EFFECTS FOR THE TWO MAC C-141 FLIGHTS SCHEDULED APRIL 27.

8. LATE THAT AFTERNOON, CHARGE INFORMED ME A 72-HOURS EXTENSION HAD BEEN GRANTED BY THE EPMG, BUT DISCUSSION WITH THE OIC CONCLUDED THAT A 48-HOUR EXTENSION WOULD BE ADEQUATE TO REMOVE THE 21 CATEGORIES OF EQUIPMENT DESIGNATED BY CINCUSNAVEUR. GIVEN THE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT PAYLOAD ASSEMBLED FOR WEDNESDAY'S FLIGHTS AND THE POSSIBILITY OF ANOTHER REVERSAL OF EPMG COOPERATION REQUIRING ALL USG PERSONNEL TO LEAVE AT ONE TIME, CHARGE AND I AGREED THAT THE ORIGINAL TWO FLIGHTS SHOULD REMAIN SCHEDULED. ALL USG PERSONNEL WERE INFORMED THAT EVENING OF THE EXTENSION. AS IT WAS DESIRABLE TO MINIMIZE THE NUMBER OF USG PERSONNEL IN ASMARA, AT THE CONGEN I DECIDED THAT THE ADM OFFICER, WHO HAD BEEN HANDLING WITH EFFICIENCY AND DISPATCH MATTERS OF SECURITY, PACKING OF USG AND PERSONAL PROPERTY, TERMINATION OF LOCAL EMPLOYEES, FINANCIAL PROBLEMS AND

CLAIMS, AS WELL AS ACTING AS BACK-UP COMMUNICATOR AND CONSULAR OFFICER, SHOULD ACCOMPANY THE USG PROPERTY TO ATHENS FOR SORTING AND SAFEGUARDING. THE MSG'S WERE DISPATCHED TO PROTECT THEIR FILES, PROPERTY AND SMALL ARMS. AT KAGNEW A TEAM OF SIX USN, ONE PA&E AND SIX
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CISCO WERE SELECTED FOR THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERTISE IN THE EQUIPMENT TO BE REMOVED FROM BRAVO. THE CORPSMAN, SECURITY OFFICER AND ALL OTHER USG PERSONNEL AND FOUR NON-AMCIT DEPENDENTS WERE TO DEPART WEDNESDAY. THREE CISCO EMPLOYEES, HOWEVER, HAD TO WAIT UNTIL FRIDAY'S FLIGHT.

10. FROM SUNDAY ONWARD, WE WERE ASSURED THAT THE EPMG WOULD RETURN THE TWO CISCO EMPLOYEES ON LEAVE IN MASSAWA (SPIRES AND BLAND) TO ASMARA ASAP. THE CHARTER FLIGHTS SCHEDULED FOR MONDAY AND TUESDAY WERE ALLEGEDLY CANCELED BECAUSE OF BAD WEATHER. HINDSIGHT INDICATES THAT THE EPMG AT THAT POINT WERE USING THESE TWO AS PAWNS TO TIGHTLY CONTROL OUR ACTIONS DURING THE CLOSEOUT. EVIDENCE OF THIS WAS THE PLAINTIVE TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH THE EPMG COMMANDER IN MASSAWA WHO SAID HE HAD BEEN TASKED WITH THE TRANSPORT OF BLAND AND SPIRES TO ASMARA BUT HAD NO AIRCRAFT AND WAS NOT SENT ANY BY OFFICIALS IN ASMARA. HE IMPLIED THERE WERE NO WEATHER PROBLEMS. THEY WERE THEN SCHEDULED TO RETURN WEDNESDAY MORNING BUT WITH THE EXTENSION, THIS FLIGHT WAS SET FOR WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON AND THEN CANCELED AGAIN. FINALLY, THURSDAY MORNING, ABRAHAM TELEPHONED ME FROM ASMARA AIRPORT ANDI SUGGESTED HE GO IMMEDIATELY TO THE AIR CHARTER SERVICE AND ARRANGE FOR A LIGHT. HE APPEARED UNAWARE, AND THEREFORE ANNOYED, THAT THE TWO HAD NOT BEEN RETURNED, AND, GOOD TO HIS WORD, BLAND AND SPIRES ARRIVED IN ASMARA LATER THAT MORNING. BY THIS TIME THE EPMG HAD FOUND A NEW PAWN TO MAINTAIN THEIR CONTROL.

11. ON THE MORNING OF APRIL 26, CISCO EMPLOYEE ERNEST FRANZ MARRIED HIS ETHIOPIAN GIRLFIREND OF FIVE YEARS, BELAINESH. I HAD COUNSELED HIM IN ADVANCE THAT THE MARRIAGE WOULD CREATE MASSIVE PROBLEMS FOR US ALL, BUT AFTER THE WEDDING, I AUTHENTICATED HIS MARRIAGE DOCUMENTS. DESPITE THE EFFORTS OF SEVERAL HIGHLY-PLACED
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FRIENDS OF FRANZ, OBTAINING A PASSPORT AND EXIT PERMIT

FOR HIS WIFE WOULD CLEARLY BE A MAJOR OBSTACLE AS EPMG OFFICIALS CONTESTED THAT AS THE MARRIAGE POST-DATED THE CLOSURE ORDER, THIS CONSTITUTED THE IMPROPER EXPATRIATION OF AN ETHIOPIAN NATIONAL. THIS SITUATION WAS TO BE THE FINAL DRAMA OF THE AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL.

12. WEDNESDAY MORNING WAS SPENT IN FINAL PACKING AND SEALING BY CUSTOMS OF USG AND PRIVATE PROPERTY. IN ACCORDANCE WITH A PRECISE SCHEDULE, 22 USG PERSONNEL, 4 DEPENDENTS, VIRTUALLY ALL CONGEN PROPERTY AND ALL PERSONAL EFFECTS WERE CONVOYED TO THE AIRPORT TO AWAIT THE TWO MAC FLIGHTS. ALONG THE AIRPORT ROAD WERE A NUMBER OF ASMARA RESIDENTS, SOME IN TEARS, SOMBERLY WATCHING THE DEPARTURE OF AMERICANS THE FIRST MAC AIRCRAFT ARRIVED AS SCHEDULED AND PALLETIZING OF CARGO

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BEGAN. AT THIS POINT THE OIC RETURNED TO ECHO TO ESCORT HIS SELECT DETAIL TO BRAVO TO BEGIN DISASSEMBLY AND PACKING OF PRIORITY EQUIPMENT. I REMAINED AT THE AIRPORT AND THE CRO WAS IN CHARGE AT THE CONGEN, AND COMMUNICATIONS WAS CONSTANTLY MAINTAINED. THE LOADING OF THE C-141 WAS OCCASIONALLY DELAYED BECAUSE OF LACK

OF EXPERIENCED DIRECTION. WHEN THE OIC'S DETAIL REACHED BRAVO, THEY WERE NOT PERMITTED TO REMOVE ANYTHING BECAUSE OF CONFLICTING INSTRUCTIONS TO THE GUARDS. I WENT TO SEE MENGESHA AND OBTAINED HIS PERMISSION FOR THE OICQEWXPZO RETURN AT 1500. THE DETAIL RETURNED AT THAT TIME AND BEGAN DISASSEMBLY. THE FIRST AIRCRAFT DEPARTED AT 1520 WITH ALL PASSENGERS, ALL USG PROPERTY AND MOST OF THE PERSONAL EFFECTS. THE SECOND MAC AIRCRAFT LANDED AT 1420, DELIVERED SIX PALLETS AND LARGE CRATES, LOADED THREE PALLETS AND A CONGEN ARMORED
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SEDAN WHICH THE CRO HAD CLEARED BY PHONE WITH LOCAL OFFICIALS. DURING THESE OPERATIONS, PERMISSION WAS OBTAINED FROM 21AT AF TO LEAVE FIVE USAF CARGO HANDLERS TO ASSIST IN PACKING KAGNEW EQUIPMENT. THE SECOND MAC AIRCRAFT DEPARTED AT 1630 AND THE CARGO HANDLERS WENT TO BRAVO WITH THEIR 6K FORKLIFT. THE LATTER DEVELOPED HYDRAULIC PROBLEMS RAISING THE POSSIBILITY OF HAVING TO AIRLIFT IN A SECOND FORKLIFT BY A SECOND FLIGHT ON APRIL 29.

13. THURSDAY MORNING ONE SECTION OF THE OIC'S DETAIL PROCEEDED TO BRAVO, WHILE THE SECOND SMALLER GROUP QUICKLY REPAIRED THE FORKLIFT. BEFORE 1300 THE OIC'S TEAM, IN AN EXTRAORDINARY EFFORT, HAD DISASSEMBLED, PACKED AND LOADED 100 PERCENT OF ALL 21 CATEGORIES OF EQUIPMENT PLUS SPARES. HIE MEN RETURNED TO ECHO TO SECURE THEIR EQUIPMENT AND REPORT THEIR SUCCESS. AN EXACT WEIGHT OF EACH PALLET WAS GIVEN, AND ONE C-141 FLIGHT WOULD BE ADEQUATE. AT THE CONGEN WE WERE INVOLVED IN CONSULAR PROBLEMS. DURING THE DAY, IN ACCORDANCE WITH DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTIONS, I AGAIN CONTACTED ALL PRIVATE AMCITS OFFERING THEM TRANSPORT ON THE MAC AIRLIFT APRIL 29. THEY ALL DECLINED. TWO OF THREE ETHIOPINA WIVES OF U.S. ARMY PERSONNEL OF SHAPE BELGIUM WHO COULD BE CONTACTED WERE CONVINCED NOT TO INSIST ON MAC TRANSPORT AS ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES WAS STILL FLYING. WE FACILITATED THEIR TICKET AND VISA PROBLEMS. THE OBJECT WAS TO AVOID A PANIC AMONG THE LITERALLY SCORES OF ERITREANS WHO HAVE SOME CLAIM TO USG PROTECTION AFTER THE LONG U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THE REGION. OUR ATTENTION THEN SHIFTED TO BELAINESH FRANZ AS THERE HAD BEEN NO HEADWAY IN OBTAINING HER PASSPORT AND EXIT PERMIT. REPEATED CALLS TO ABRAHAM AND MENGESHU SHOWED AN INDICATION THAT SHE WOULD BE PERMITTED TO ACCOMPANY HER HUSBAND. I EVEN SPOKE WITH THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATOR WHO HAS NEVER BEEN KNOWN TO SPEAK ENGLISH
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TO A FOREIGNER SINCE HIS ARRIVAL IN ERITREA IN AUGUST 1976. HE SAID THE MATTER WOULD AGAIN BE REFERRED TO ADDIS FOR CONSIDERATION. THE EMBASSY AND THE CONGEN BOTH WEIGHED IN HEAVILY WITH THE LEGAL ARGUMENTS, BUT OUR LAST CONTACT AT 2130 APRIL 28 DID NOT PRODUCE AN ASSURANCE SHE COULD LEAVE WITH HER HUSBAND. DURING THE AFTERNOON, OUR SITUATION WAS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY A 3-HOURS SECURE COMMO OUTAGE DUE TO PROBLEMS ON THE ADDIS-ASMARA MICROWAVE LINK.

14. AT 0500 FRIDAY THE NCOIC DISPOSED OF THE INOPERATIVE PARTS OF FIVE M-2 CARBINES AND APPROX 4,000 ROUNDS OF AMMUNITION DOWN THE CONGEN WELL. AT 0700 OUR LAST SECURE COMMUNICATIONS WERE SHUT DOWN, ALL CRYPTO COMPONENTS DESTROYED, AND REMAINING EQUIPMENT PACKED FOR SHIPMENT. AT 0845 A FLAG-LOWERING CEREMONY WAS CONDUCTED WITH THREE MSG'S IN DUTY UNIFORM, WITHOUT SIDEARMS, LOWERING AND FOLDING THE FLAG. THE CONGEN'S LAST MESSAGE WAS THEN READ TO THE ASSEMBLED STAFF AND LOCAL EMPLOYEES. AT 0930 THE HF E&E RADIO WAS PACKED, AND ALL VEHICLES LOADED. THE VAULT AND ALL SAFES WERE CLOSED AND LOCKED. AT 0945 WE WERE CONVOYED TO ECHO FOR ESSEMBLY WITH KAGNEW PERSONNEL. MR. AND MRS. FRANC, ACCOMPANIED BY A CONGEN DRIVER, WERE ATTEMPTING TO COMPLY WITH INSTRUCTIONS I HAD BEEN GIVEN BY MENGESHA TO COMPLETE THE FORMALITIES TO OBTAIN HER DOCUMENTATION. JUST PRIOR TO DEPARTURE OF THE CONVOY FOR THE AIRPORT, I AGAIN ATTEMPTED TO SEE MENGESHA ABOUT THE FRANZ CASE, ONLY

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OC-06 CCO-00 A-01 OPR-02 SY-05 DRC-01
PER-01 MMO-01 OCL-00 FBO-02 SCS-03 SCA-01 FS-01
ARA-06 CPR-01 VO-03 /102 W
-----041405Z 126208 /43

R 041037Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 357
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
JCS WASHDC
OSD
USCINCEUR
CINCUSNAVEUR
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
NAVCOMSTA NEA MAKRI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 5 OF 5 ATHENS 4072

TO BE TOLD HE HAD JUST ENTERED A THREE-HOUR MEETING.
I RETURNED TO KAGNEW AND, FOLLOWING A BRIEF YET DIGNI-
FIED FLAG-LOWERING CEREMONY AT THE MAIN GATE, LED THE
CONVOY TO THE AIRPORT. THE MAC AIRCRAFT ARRIVED ON
SCHEDULE AT 1130 AND LOADING BEGAN.THERE WAS A BRIEF
CONFRONTATION WITH AIRPORT CUSTOMS WHO WERE INSISTING
ON PACKING LISTS, A FORMALITY NOT REQUIRED ON WEDNESDAY.
WE IGNORED THE OBSTRUCTION AND 30 MINUTES LATER RECEIVED
EPMG PERMISSION TO LOAD, BY WHICH TIME THE AIRCRAFT
WAS ALREADY HALF FULL.

15. HAVING MADE NO REAL PROGRESS DURING THE MORNING,
MR. AND MRS. FRANZ JOINED THE USG PERSONNEL AT THE AIR-
PORT. ABRAHAM, WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED US TO THE AIRPORT,
FINALLY AGREED TO PRY MENGESHA FROM HIS MEETING AND
AGAIN REQUESTED SHE BE PERMITTED TO ACCOMPANY HER
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HUSBAND. AT 1200 MENGESHA WOULD STILL OFFER NO ASSUR-
ANCES. FINALLY AT 1230 HE CALLED GRANTING HER PERMISSION
TO LEAVE. I ACCOMPANIED THEM BACK TO HIS OFFICE, RE-
CEIVED A LETTER OF AUTHORIZATION, WENT TO MOFA TO
PICK UP THE PASSPORT AND TO IMMIGRATION TO OBTAIN THE
EXIT VISA. BY THIS TIME THE AIRCRAFT WAS FULLY LOADED.
WE RETURNED TO THE AIRCRAFT AT 1325, ALL PERSONNEL WERE
EMBARKED, AND AT 1340 THE AIRCRAFT TOOK OFF WITH ALL
REMAINING USG PERSONNEL AND ONE NON-AMCIT DEPENDENT.
WE ARRIVED AT HELLENIKON AIR BASE AT 1820 LOCAL.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS: THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS
WERE GLEANED FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH THE CONGEN STAFF,
THE OIC OF NCU AND THE MANAGEMENT OF KAGNEW;

A. ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE MADE IN ADVANCE OF THEIR
ARRIVAL FOR A DEBRIEFING OF ALL THE PRINCIPALS IN THIS
SORT OF EXERCISE. THE DEBRIEF SHOULD BE WHILE THEIR
EXPERIENCES ARE FRESH AND BEFORE THEY DISPERSE TO ON-
WARD ASSIGNMENT. INFORMATION OF ONLY MINOR APPARENT
VALUE ESTABLISHES THE ATMOSPHERICS FOR THIS TYPE OF

SITUATION WHICH CAN BE HELPFUL TO THOSE WHO MAY FACE
SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE FUTURE.

B. AS OIC REPORTED DURING THE EXERCISE, THERE IS A
CRITICAL NEED FOR ONE COMMAND ALONE TO BE THE SOLE
COMMUNICATOR TO THE POST INVOLVED IN THE EXERCISE.
BEING INFO ADDEE ON MESSAGES BETWEEN OPERATIONAL
COMMANDS CONFUSED US AND EMBASSY ADDIS AS TO WHAT WERE
MAC'S PLANS DAY BY DAY, EVEN HOUR BY HOUR. IN THIS
CASE, USCINCEUR WAS THE RESPONSIBLE COMMAND, AND THEY
SHOULD DISSEMINATE OUR MESSAGE TRAFFIC AS THEY DEAM
APPROPRIATE, RELIEVING US OF THE BURDEN OF ANSWERING
QUESTIONS AND REQUIREMENTS OF SEPARATE COMMANDS.

C. AS REPORTED, THERE WERE SEVERAL OCCASIONS WHEN
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EPMG ATTITUDES ABRUPTLY CHANGED, APPARENTLY AS A RESULT
OF EFFORTS BEING MADE IN WASHINGTON ADDIS AND OTHER
AFRICAN CAPITALS. WE HAD REQUESTED THAT WE RECEIVE
ONLY TRAFFIC RELATING TO OUR WITHDRAWAL, AND TRAFFIC
WAS GENERALLY HELD TO A MINIMUM. THERE WERE, HOWEVER,
SITREPS FROM THE DEPARTMENT OUTLINING DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS
BEING MADE ON OUR BEHALF AS WELL AS THE OVERVIEW FROM
WASHINGTON. WE RECEIVED NONE OF THESE. IT WOULD HAVE
BEEN EXTREMELY HELPFUL TO KNOW WHAT KINDS OF PRESSURE
THE EPMG WAS SUBJECT TO IN ORDER TO BETTER GAUGE HOW
THEY MIGHT REACT. I CONSIDER THIS OF DIRECT AND VITAL
IMPORTANCE TO THE ENTIRE OPERATION. IT IS RECOMMENDED
THAT AN OFFICER BE DESIGNATED AT THE EMBASSY AND/OR
DEPARTMENT TO DETERMINE WHAT POLITICAL INFORMATION
SHOULD BE PASSED TO THE POST.

D. EXISTING INFORMATION ON THE DESTRUCTION OF CRYPTO
EQUIPMENT SHOULD BE REVIEWED. OTHER THAN IMMEDIATE
EMERGENCY DESTRUCTION WHICH COULD 1) ENDANGER LIVES,
2) REVEAL THE EXISTENCE OF SENSITIVE EQUIPMENT, AND
3) PREMATURELY SEVER SECURE COMMUNICATIONS, PHASED
DESTRUCTION, IF TIME PERMITS, IS PREFERABLE. EVERY
POST SHOULD BE PROVIDED INFORMATION ON HOW MUCH TIME IS
REQUIRED TO DESTROY CLASSIFIED DOCUMENTS, CRYPTO CIRCUIT
BOARDS, KEYING MATERIALS WITH THE TYPE OF DESTRUCTION
EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE AT POST. THIS INFORMATION IS
CRITICAL IN DETERMINING PRIORITIES ON THE USE OF MAN-
POWER DURING AN EMERGENCY EXERCISE.

E. A MILITARY OFFICER SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO FLY WITH
EACH MAJOR MAC MISSION TO COORDINATE THE LOADING OF
EQUIPMENT IN CONJUNCTION WITH PRIORITIES OF THOSE AT
THE POST. THIS OFFICER SHOULD HAVE AN AWARENESS OF

THE IMMEDIATE POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONDITIONS, AS
WELL AS A KNOWLEDGE OF AIRCRAFT CAPABILITIES AND SCHEDULES.

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F. THE PRINCIPAL OFFICER AND/OR CONSULAR OFFICER MUST
BE GIVEN GREATER DISCRETION IN DETERMINING THE THREAT
TO PRIVATE AMCITS SO AS TO HAVE SOME LATITUDE ON HOW
TO ADVISE THEM TO CONDUCT THEMSELVES. IT IS NOT HELPFUL
TO RECEIVE "INSTRUCTIONS" WHICH WILL TEND TO PANIC
AMCITS WHEN THE SITUATION DOES NOT WARRANT IT. PANIC IS
TO BE AVOIDED AT ALL COSTS. DEPARTMENT "SUGGESTIONS"
WOULD BE INFINITELY MORE HELPFUL.

G. GUIDANCE IS REQUIRED FROM EITHER THE DEPARTMENT OR
EMBASSY ON TERMINATION BENEFITS AND PROCEDURES FOR
LOCAL EMPLOYEES. THE EFFECTIVE AND LOYAL SERVICE OF
THESE EMPLOYEES PROVED ESSENTIAL TO AN ORDERLY CLOSEOUT,
AND THEY ARE MOTIVATED PRIMARILY BY THEIR BELIEF THEY
WILL BE TREATED FAIRLY AND WITH CONCERN BY THE USG.

H. GUIDANCE SHOULD BE OFFERED DURING SUCH EXERCISES,
OR PREFERABLY PRIOR TO AN EMERGENCY SITUATION, AS TO
WHAT USG MATERIAL SHOULD BE REMOVED IF THE SITUATION
PERMITS. WHILE WE APPRECIATE THAT EMBASSY ADDIS HAD
IMMENSE PROBLEMS OF THEIR OWN DURING THIS PERIOD, NO
CONTACT WAS INITIATED BY THE ADMIN SECTION TO GUIDE US
IN WHAT WAS THE PRIORITY FOR REMOVAL OF USG PROPERTY.
WE THEREFORE ASSUMED THAT WHAT WE PROPOSED WAS CON-
SISTENT WITH THEIR PERCEIVED PRIORITIES AND PROCEEDED
ACCORDINGLY.

17. I AGAIN OFFER MY MOST SINCERE APPRECIATION TO ALL
MILITARY COMMANDS, ESPECIALLY MAC AND 21 AF, THE
DEPARTMENT AND THE EMBASSY FOR THEIR SUPPORT AND COOPERA-
TION. OUR SPECIAL THANKS GO TO JUSMAGG AND EMBASSY
ATHENS FOR THE SMOOTH, EFFECTIVE AND PERSONABLE HANDLING
OF OUR PERSONNEL ON ARRIVAL AT ATHENS.
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Message Attributes

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Concepts: n/a
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Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
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